

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 076254

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TO CINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 076254

EXDIS MILITARY ADDEE HANDLE AS SPECAT EXCLUSIVE

CINCEUR AND CINCEUR FOR POLAD

FOLLOWING SENT ACTION SECSTATE INFO TRIPOLI RABAT ALGIERS
PARIS CAIRO DAMASCUS JIDDA KUWAIT BEIRUT AMMAN LONDON
ABU DHABI MANAMA BAGHDAD MUSCAT DOHA TEL AVIV FROM
TUNIS APR 1

QUOTE C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 1880

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OVIP (HENRY A. KISSINGER) SF, IS
SUBJECT: MIDDLE EAST NEGOTIATIONS

REF: (1) JERUSALEM 658; (2) TUNIS 1679

1. SUMMARY: FOREIGN MINISTER CHATTI HAS EXPRESSED DEEP
ADMIRATION FOR SECRETARY'S RECENT PEACE MISSION IN MIDDLE
EAST AND BELIEVES THAT RESULTS WILL BE POSITIVE. CHATTI
APPRECIATES PRESIDENT FORD'S MIDDLE EAST POLICY AND
CONSIDERS THAT OPPORTUNITIES FOR MAKING PROGRESS RE
ARAB-ISRAEL SETTLEMENT CONTINUE TO EXIST. GOT IS NOT
RPT NOT PESSIMISTIC AND ESTIMATES THAT EVEN ASSAD IS
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PAGE 02 STATE 076254

READY TO PLAY BALL IF CONDITIONS ARE RIGHT. END SUMMARY.

2. FOLLOWING FOREIGN MINISTER CHATTI'S RETURN TO TUNIS MARCH 31, AMBASSADOR SUCCEEDED IN CATCHING HIM MORNING APRIL 1 BEFORE HIS DEPARTURE EVENING SAME DAY FOR IRAQ. NOTING THAT WE HAD ALREADY CONVEYED ORALLY TO DIRECTOR OF POLITICAL AFFAIRS SECRETARY'S MESSAGE OF MARCH 23, AMBASSADOR GAVE CHATTI AIDE MEMOIRE CONTAINING TEXT, WHICH CHATTI READ WITH GREAT CARE AND INTEREST.

3. AMBASSADOR IDENTIFIED FOLLOWING THREE ESSENTIAL POINTS AS SUMMING UP CURRENT USG POSITION: (A) FOLLOWING RETURN OF SECRETARY KISSINGER FROM MIDDLE EAST USG HAS CONCLUDED THAT A PERIOD OF REEXAMINATION OF SITUATION IN MIDDLE EAST IS REQUIRED; (B) USG COMMITMENT TO MOVE TOWARD PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST REMAINS UNDIMINISHED; AND (C) WE ARE PREPARED TO FOLLOW ANY APPROACH WHICH WOULD ADVANCE THIS OBJECTIVE, INCLUDING PARTICIPATING IN LONG-PLANNED GENEVA CONFERENCE.

4. CHATTI ASKED THAT I CONVEY TO SECRETARY HIS AND TUNISIAN GOVERNMENT'S DEEP ADMIRATION FOR THE COURAGEOUS AND CLAIRVOYANT MANNER IN WHICH THE SECRETARY HAD GONE ABOUT HIS TASK. GOT HAD FOLLOWED SECRETARY'S PROGRAM CLOSELY. CHATTI SAID HE WOULD CERTAINLY NOT RPT NOT CHARACTERIZE SECRETARY'S LATEST MISSION TO MIDDLE EAST AS A FAILURE. ON CONTRARY, HE BELIEVED THAT SECRETARY'S EFFORTS HAVE CREATED A POSITIVE ATMOSPHERE. SITUATION HAS NOW BEEN CLARIFIED IN MORE REALISTIC FASHION, GIVING MORE WEIGHT TO FUTURE EFFORTS. POSITIONS ON BOTH SIDES HAVE BEEN BETTER DEFINED, AND THERE IS GREATER EVIDENCE OF ISRAEL'S INFLEXIBILITY. EVERYONE IS NOW FORCED TO SIT BACK AND REFLECT, INCLUDING AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION, U.S. CONGRESS, EUROPE AND ISRAEL. USG DECISION TO REEXAMINE ITS MIDDLE EAST POLICY IS WELCOME AND DESIRABLE AND HAS NOT DOUBT BEEN FACILITATED BY SECRETARY'S RECENT MISSION.

5. CHATTI CONTINUE THAT PRESIDENT FORD'S STAUNCH SUPPORT OF SECRETARY AND PRESIDENT'S OVERALL POLICY TOWARD MIDDLE EAST IS GREATLY ADMIRERD AND APPRECIATED BY TUNISIAN GOVERNMENT. SADAT'S STATESMANLIKE SPEECH AND HIS DECISION TO OPEN SUEZ CANAL ARE ALSO POSITIVE FACTORS IN SITUATION. IN CHATTI'S VIEW, THERE

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PAGE 03 STATE 076254

IS ADEQUATE TIME TO PREPARE SOBERLY FOR GENEVA CONFERENCE. SECRETARY KISSINGER HAS EMERGED STRONGER THEN EVER. IT IS STILL NOT TOO LATE MAKE SOME PROGRESS. CHATTI SAID HE CERTAIN THAT SECRETARY WILL SUCCEED IN FURTHER EFFORTS. WHILE TUNISIAN GOVERNMENT NOT NECESSARILY OPTIMISTIC, IT IS NOT PESSIMISTIC. IT DOES NOT BELIEVE CURRENT SITUATION IS "DANGEROUS".

6. CHATTI AGAIN REITERATED HIS VIEW THAT PRESIDENT ASSAD

OF SYRIA REMAINS A MODERATE FIGURE WHO WANTS PEACE. HE IS FORCED FROM TIME TO TIME, HOWEVER, TO PLAY TO ARAB GALLERIES, AS IN CASE OF HIS RECENT ADDRESS AT TOBRUK IN LIBYA. GOT REGRETS THAT IN THIS SPEECH ASSAD CALLED FOR IMMEDIATE ARAB UNITY WHEN THIS IS SO UNREALISTIC AND ASSAD KNOWS AS MUCH. CHATTI EMPHASIZED THAT ASSAD IS AFRAID OF BEING "LEFT ALONE", AND REMAINS RESPONSIVE TO PEACE INITIATIVES IF FAVORABLE OPPORTUNITY IS PRESENTED.

7. COMMENT: CHATTI IS OBVIOUSLY IMPRESSED BY TREMENDOUS EFFORT UNDERTAKEN BY SECRETARY TO BRING ABOUT SECOND STEP DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT AND CLEARLY IS NOT DISCOURAGED BY CURRENT LACK OF RESULTS. AS IN CASE OF TUNISIANS AS A WHOLE HE IS PINNING BLAME ON ISRAEL, CONTENDING THAT SADAT CAN NEVER AGREE TO PUBLIC UNDERTAKING OF NON-BELLIGERENCE AS LONG AS ISRAELI SOLDIERS OCCUPY EGYPTIAN SOIL. IN SHORT, TUNISIAN GOVERNMENT CONTINUES TO ROOT FOR OUR EFFORTS AND SEEMS TO BELIEVE THAT ULTIMATELY WE WILL SUCCEED.
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UNQUOTE INGERSOLL

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